



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Jack Miller (858) 694-3595

WEST NILE VIRUS CONTINUES TO SPREAD

Vector Control Takes to the Air and Finds New Mosquito-Breeding Sites

County Vector Control officials announced today that 16 more dead birds have tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV), bringing the season-high total to 74 infected birds. The crows and jays were discovered in Valley Center (3), Oceanside (3), Pala (2), Ramona (2), Poway (1), Scripps Ranch (1), Tierrasanta (1), Potrero (1), Escondido (1), and Fallbrook (1).

"The Vector Control Program is now taking to the air to detect and treat mosquito-breeding sites," said Gary Erbeck, director of the County Department of Environmental Health. "Yesterday we conducted aerial surveys of Fallbrook, El Cajon and Alpine using the Sheriff's helicopter. We identified numerous ponds and backyard swimming pools that are likely breeding mosquitoes, which we will investigate and treat as soon as possible."

In addition to the aerial surveillance, 1,500 letters were sent directly to residents in the mosquito-breeding areas, explaining the higher risk of acquiring WNV in those neighborhoods.

"Despite the County's regular ground and aerial treatments in known mosquito-breeding areas, WNV is still present and infecting birds, which means mosquitoes are likely breeding in residents' backyards. County Vector Control staff can only treat public areas, unless residents request assistance with mosquito control on their property," said Erbeck. "It is critical that people check their property every week to ensure water is not collecting in their yards."

Larger water sources, such as horse troughs, decorative fountains and inoperable swimming pools, can be stocked with free mosquito-eating fish that are available at 14 locations around the county.

Public reporting of dead birds continues to be a vital tool in controlling the spread of WNV. Residents should report dead crows, ravens, jays, hawks or owls if they have been dead for less than 24 hours, do not have a foul odor, are not infested with ants or flies, and are not stiff. To report dead birds, or to get information about mosquito-eating fish and West Nile virus, visit the County's Web site at www.SDFightTheBite.com or call 1-888-551-INFO (4636).

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1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 208 • SAN DIEGO, CA 92101